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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-15 /068 W
----------128503 121408Z /43
R 121058Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6590
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 0038

E.O.11652:N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SF
SUB: FEDERAL PARTY ADOPTS NEW NAME, ACCEPTS NEW
CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS

SUMMARY: THE "COLOURED" FEDERAL PARTY, THE MINORITY PARTY
IN THE COLORED PERSONS REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (CRC) HELD
A NATIONAL CONGRESS IN PORT ELIZABETH ON JANUARY 6-7 AT
WHICH IT RENAMED ITSELF THE FREEDOM PARTY AND IN WHICH
ITS LEADER DR. W.J. BERGINS SAID THAT THE PARTY ACCEPTED
"IN PRINCIPLE" THE SAG'S NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS.
NEITHER ACTION SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERS THE STATE OF PLAY
IN "COLORED" POLITICS NOR THE SAG'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE
ACCEPTANCE OF ITS CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS. END SUMMARY

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, SOME 137 DELEGATES ATTENDED
THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE "COLORED" FEDERAL PARTY IN PORT
ELIZABETH JAN 6-7 AND APPROVED MOTION TO ADOPT THE NAME
FREEDOM PARTY. DR. W.J. BERGINS, NATIONAL LEADER OF
THE PARTY DELIVERED OPENING ADDRESS IN WHICH HE CRITICIZED
THE LABOR PARTY FOR "SELLING OUT" TO OTHER RACE GROUPS-
A REFERENCE TO THE RECENT INKATHA-LABOR PARTY MEETING
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TO DISCUSS A POSSIBLE ALLIANCE (DURBAN 0013). WHILE
CRITICIZING VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SAG POLICIES, BERGINS
SAID THAT HIS PARTY HAD ACCEPTED THE SAG'S NEW CONSITUTIONAL
PROPOSALS BUT ONLY AS A BASIS FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATION TO
ATTAIN "FULL CITIZENSHIP" FOR ALL PEOPLES OF SOUTH AFRICA.
HE SAID THERE WERE MANY "AREAS OF DIFFICULTY" IN THE
PROPOSALS BUT "IN PRINCIPLE WE ACCEPT THEM." ONE OF THE

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CONDITIONS PROPOSED BY BERGINS WAS THAT THE COLORED
PARLIAMENT ENVISAGED IN THE PROPOSALS SHOULD BE
PHYSICALLY LOCATED IN THE COMPLEX WHICH NOW HOUSES THE WHITE
PARLIAMENT.

2. REACTIONS TO THE PARTY CONGRESS WERE ALONG PREDICTABLE
LINES. A LABOR PARTY SPOKESMAN, REV. ALLAN HENDRICKSE
SAID " A POLITICAL SKUNK BY ANY OTHER NAME WOULD STILL STINK" WHILE T
HE
LEADER OF THE INDEPENDENTS IN THE CRC,
JAC RABIE, SAID THE PARTY'S IMAGE AS A GROUP WHICH
EXISTED TO CARRY OUT GOVERNMENT POLICIES. THE AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPER
DIE BURGER, ON THE OTHER HAND, CONTRASTED THE
"REASONABLENESS" OF THE FREEDOM PARTY WITH THE LABOR
PARTY WHICH, IN ITS EFFORT TO FORM AN ALLIANCE WITH
INKATHA, WAS PROMOTING A CONFRONTATION "IN WHICH THE
BROWN PEOPLE WILL BE DELIVERED TO THE MERCY OF A BLACK
MOVEMENT... ." COLORED INTELLECTUALS AND PROFESSIONALS
WHP HAVE TRADITIONALLY REFUSED TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO
WITH "COLORED POLITICS" GENERALLY IGNORED THE AFFAIR.

3. NEITHER THE PARTY'S CHANGE OF NAME NOR ITS ACCEPTANCE OF
THE SAG'S CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS WAS UNEXPECTED AND
NEITHER ACTION IS LIKELY TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON
CURRENT POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS. OF MORE INTEREST WAS DR.
BERGIN'S CRITICAL COMMENTS ON THE LABOR PARTY- INKATHA
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ALIGNMENT. WHETHER THIS PRESAGES A WIDER EFFORT TO
DRUM UP RESISTAMCE TO THE "ALLIANCE" BY APPEALING TO
HISTORICAL FEARS OF BLACKS IN THE COLORED COMMUNITY
REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT SOME CRITICS HAVE NOTED POINTEDLY
THAT APPEALS TO "SWART GEVAAR" (BLACK PERIL) WERE THE
STOCK-IN-TRADE OF THE FEDERAL PARTY IN THE 1960S AND
EARLY 1970S. HOWEVER, THESE TACTICS WERE NOTABLY
UNSUCCESSFUL IN THE 1965 CRC ELECTIONS IN WHICH PARTY
WON ONLY 8 OUT OF 40 SEATS, AND THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO
BELIEVE THEY WOULD BE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN THE PRESENT
POLITICAL CLIMATE.

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